

POETRY

(LONDON)

A BI-MONTHLY OF MODERN VERSE AND CRITICISM



¶ The Ivy and the Ash *by* **Herbert Read**. ¶ Four War Poems
by **Audrey Beecham**. ¶ Two Poems *by* **Richard Church**.
¶ Miserere *by* **David Gascoyne**. ¶ The Ruin and the Sun *by*
Nicholas Moore. ¶ Three Poems *by* **J. C. Hall**. ¶ A Noctuary
by **Lawrence Durrell**. ¶ Louis MacNeice *by* **Stephen Spender**.
¶ Stephen Spender *by* **Charles Madge**. ¶ Lorca *by* **Herbert Read**

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VOL. I. No. 3

NOVEMBER, 1940

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EDITED BY TAMBIMUTTU

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POETRY

(London)

EDITED BY TAMBIMUTTU

VOL. 1, No. 3

NOVEMBER 15, 1940

Third Letter

On the ruins we shall build. Most of the war poems in this issue end on hope, which is the intuitional belief of poets in man's final victory over himself and circumstances. Through all the criticism and dissection of life shines this one white star of faith in man's destiny. We are flexible and bend our lives easily to a necessity over catastrophic circumstances. It is this green adaptability within us that has brought us thus far, and given us power unequalled in the animal kingdom.

We stand, here, now, and say we shall change it all. We have said it before, but we shall say it again, because things exist, and we only discover what already exists and is true. In this harsh winter we button up our coats and search for other hearths and other fires. Adaptation is our saving grace.

The man in the market-place at Athens discovered a world of pure ideas that was always constant and unchangeable. The spontaneous world about us was continually subject to change, coal passed into smoke, the seas dried up. But black was black and white, white and uninterchangeable in the world of Socrates. We therefore loaded this seemingly perfect world on our backs, built up an objective world of values, lived the life dictated by them, and mistrustful of our intuition and spontaneous convictions. Copernicus persuaded us that the sun did not really set in the West. Geoffrey Grigson (in spite of D. H. Lawrence) that intense poems of love were adolescent and obscene. Or that poetry in which objects replace emotions (objective reporting like MacNeice's) was the only poetry worth publishing. We were asked to scotch our natural impulses and propensities, in order that we may obey the precepts of rationality the more docilely.

In fact, in all the branches of human activity: science, poetry, religion, etc., we preferred the dictates of pure reason to our spontaneous convictions. The rationalists persuaded us that the warm adjective should go into cold storage, that excessive compression should dull the imagination, that it was more evocative, which was not true. They succeeded in transmitting through their influence, a hard and unevocative quality to much of the verse written during recent years. To compare these two extracts I have chosen at random from *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*:

The jaded calendar revolves,
Its nuts need oil, carbon chokes the valves,
The excess sugar of a diabetic culture
Rotting the nerve of life and literature;
(Louis MacNeice)

And now the earth they spurned rose up against
them in anger,
Tier upon tier it towered, the terrible Appennines.
(C. Day Lewis)

If we consider these two passages psychologically, and look for the poetic impulse behind the words, the former proceeds more from the mind than emotion, and the latter vice versa. The first passage is evidently meant to appeal to the intellect; it is didactic and exhibits no incantational qualities, not only by reason of its objective method of presentation, but also because rhythms and sounds that have a mystical, mantric appeal have been omitted. The latter is more thoroughly incantational. Mr. MacNeice's lines have an arid bloodless atmosphere, neither do they stir the subconscious in the way Mr. Day Lewis' do. To put it simply, the lines may have been written with more "feeling." From this it would seem that the emasculation of poetic qualities in verse,

through the introduction of purely rational concepts of Beauty, and the consequent diminishing of the intrinsic incantational qualities of verse are not to be desired in the long run, though they may have their usefulness in ages of experiment. At the moment, however, man needs to preserve all his vital resources, especially those that are implied by faith in transcendental values, for the preservation of his spiritual integrity.

In the Orient culture has never dissociated itself from life, and attained a self-consistency of its own and power independent of life, but here in the Occident we have built up an objective world of culture and thrown life under its yoke. As we understand the term, culture in the West is undoubtedly more culture than in the Orient, but Oriental life is more perfect because its culture is founded on tradition which in turn proceeds from spontaneity. Ortega Y. Gasset has said that: "Before the last Chinese revolution could be accomplished it had to be preached, and proved to have been suggested by the most orthodox Confucian dogma." But the excitement that prevailed in the West, over the discovery of the more perfect logical world of ideas, of "rationalities," was such that its philosophers developed it to its ultimate significance and made all life bend before it. The turbulence, the glory and the tragedy of this hemisphere is due to the supervening of this abstract world of Concept in our consciousness. Culture has become separated from the vitality which created it, and while it has been refined to the last degree, spontaneous life itself has become petrified, crude and almost vestigial in an unnatural isolation.

In art, in politics, in religion, we made ourselves believe what we really did not believe, believing what seemed the most correct to us logically, "culturally." We extolled as consummate works of art what

did not really move us, what did not move our emotions. In other words, we lost our self-consistency, our spontaneity. We clung on, without much faith, to an undeveloped and out-of-date idea of democracy, when it should have been continually receiving a revitalizing stream, and adjusted so that it moved the deeper parts of our personalities. This unfortunate dualism between what we believe and what we think we believe is the root of our present troubles. "O democracy, where is your sunny tree?" writes Nicholas Moore in this issue.

Human life has its two dimensions in cultural and in vital values. We developed the cultural-abstract value of Beauty and allowed the vital imperative of Enjoyment to fall into disuse. We cultivated Truth without Sincerity, and Goodness without Faith or Emotional Drive.

This is one reason why a great deal of modern poetry has an appeal only to a limited public. Being too *mental*, too cultural, over-burdened with too many formal values that emerged from various poetry movements of recent times, nothing else is to be expected. The birth of poetry is in the irrational, and the psychology of its appeal, like music, devolves finally on the subconscious. The one real way of criticizing poetry is by the use of methods based on psychology. The appeal of definite rhythms and rhymes in poetry is primitive and spontaneous, and where these are absent there is a lower measure of enjoyment. Symbols in verse that are abstract fabrications of the mind, and do not move the deeper levels of our emotions, are only added tension on the mind, and in no measure contribute to a poem's evocative power.

Modern verse, with the accumulated wealth of many recent poetry movements, has now the onus of discovering and preserving the more spontaneous and traditional qualities in poetry.

NEXT ISSUE OF POETRY (January 15)

*will contain a long social-objective poem by W. R. RODGERS,
written in the form of a dialogue*

THE IVY AND THE ASH

The ivy and the ash
cast a dark arm
across the beck.
In this rocky ghyll
I sit and watch
the eye-iris water move
like muscles over stones
smoothed by this ageless action.

The water brings
from the high fell
an icy current of air.
There is no sun to splinter
the grey visionary quartz.
The heart is cool
and adamant among the rocks
mottled with wet moss.

Descend into the valley
explore the plain
even the salt sea
but keep the heart
cool in the memory
of ivy, ash
and the glistening beck
running swiftly through the black rocks.

HERBERT READ

THREE POEMS OF THE WAR

(for H.S.)

1 NORWAY

Once the sound of its drum has burst the eardrums
And the loud shriek anguished at last to silence
Love of itself is vanquished;
But the relinquished
Hold of the lover sleeping binds the mind
To levels lower and to those more stale
Than pools of stagnant rain beneath the earth.

Spain, our ace, was tricked by molten gold:
And our sly trail unrolled on Europe's map
Slugged action, flounders now through snow
To race the waiting bomb-burst of our hearts.
The rhythmical stop-go
Of fate's two eyes suffice to hold us back
From any courage which would jeopardise
The bonds which hold our honour to a rack.

O England, may your blight of boredom melt
Like sweat of love, and may your wind ride up
Above the doldrums of a boring war
To blast the flags that flap a national shame
Out of the sky
And cheer the hands that fail
And fall from masts.

AUDREY BEECHAM

2 *SONG*

There's no more talk and ease
No more time to do as you please
Pressure of men on roads, of boots and heels,
Lorries and guns, and birds again
This winter will freeze.

War comes flooding like a tide
O where shall we run, shall hide?

Setting out or turning back,
The old wound split in new strife,
A new wound is a new eye
A festering wound a womb of different life.

Where shall we hide but in the wound?

AUDREY BEECHAM

3 *AFTER FRANCE*

Too late now to capitulate.
Courage conquered by an armoured tank,
The serried ranks, the severed trunk thrown back
Of a generation, are betrayed by caution.
Tactics quicker than the rain has blown
Warning against latched doors, or the wind rains blows
Sparring with seagulls who divide its force.

The rook rifle and the franc tireur are lost
When marsh turns quicksand, and the marshlights flash
Direction to the unmarked swing-bird's flight.

Too late now to retaliate:
Anger thwarted by distance; and our pride
Jaded at last to life. O sacred fool
Whose cockney understatement can decry
The crater and the crass end of past hopes.
The once smug, stolid buttocks of our faith
Buttress the atlas of the world's wide scope.

AUDREY BEECHAM

EXTRACT FROM "THE RATS' TESTAMENT"

(For A. T. K. and H. G.)

We are the last survivors.
These records are eyeholes.
Their wholeness devoured
Even at time of inscription
By the cancer of mould.

The last things we have seen,
Between folded slabs of concrete
Between beams and slats
And twisted wire of girders,
Were curdled in our minds
Set in the scream of iron
And cooled by mounting waters.

These we project
Upon the last fabric,
Upon the down-curtain on Europe.

We were trained up by destiny
To this last witness.
We wear our haversacks in front
With a week's provision,
We can eat putrid fat,
And our long teeth laughed derision
At the frailness of Man
When plague whirled in the train of disaster,
Microbes to disinfectant
Even faster than around the freshly arisen
Gangrene of his wounds.

We wondered how soon
His pitiful shifts would abdicate.
His A.R.P. drill was not prepared
For the assault of the Sun.
When at last the god
Struck his brass gong and marched,
He was undone.

The Moon over whom his poets had wept,
Whom they had patronised
And vamped with liquid eyes,
Swam on in onanistic recreation:
The slightly surprised eyebrows of a woman
Unmoved by a first passionate declaration.

Then, when the Sun moved,
The shadow was torn from her other face;
And with her horned profile as a halo
She swooped across the distance
To embrace all who employed her coldness.
She was the active doom
Of those who praised frigidity.
A two-armed flail
To those who had stood motionless
Before inaccessibility lest they should fail.

The brass gong was rung
And the stars walked off the pitch.
They'd been impartial long enough.
Stretching themselves, they winked and joked
As they settled down inside
The pavilion of blackness thatched with smoke,
For they held a watching brief for the winning side.

AUDREY BEECHAM

THE UNBORN HISTORIAN

In these unmusical days I console myself
With the thought that, dark in a woman's womb,
A mortal immortal, like the human race in its cave,
Lies waiting. Or even that mother herself
Is unborn, and her mother too asleep unconceived.

No matter! The singer is destined. I hear,
Centuries hence perhaps, his wonder awaking;
I foresee his joy in the earth he believes is new,
His youth in a world that is young, the same that to us
Is old, crumbling, a ruin of passionate time.

He will cross this desert, he will find in this age of destruction
A motive for singing; he will see from the hills of the future
A landscape, a history, both simple, embalmed in the past;
And the song he will sing shall enshrine our despair,
Reveal our mad story, and from its present confusion
Discover the hope that guides us towards his birth.

RICHARD CHURCH

THE LAST REVOLUTION

The winter sunshine on parade
Draws its cold steel and raises
A distant cheer on the horizon.
The ageing heart knows what that praise is;
Recognising the revolution
With the grey flag, the quiet voice,
The final preparations made
For the coming kingdom of frost,
Where hopes are withered into beauty
And loss is worth all that is lost:
While down the twig-ends of desire,
Drop after drop, icicles form
A parody of former fire,
A poetry of the past storm.

Only the old will be content
To thaw their waning strength for this
Last gesture, and rouse their minds to make
This frigid sculpture of a kiss,
Knowing the fever of their past
Is permanent at last.

RICHARD CHURCH

THE SEAL-WOMAN

Out of the sea the actress came
and all the mills stopped milling their grain.

"Back to the sea" she said "I must go,"
but they held her whether she would or no,
and they sent a lover to make her tame
and hold her whether she would or no.

She loved the lover, she loved none other,
but he loved not her, for he loved another.

When she was tame, he let her go,
but she said "I can not leave you now!"
But they set her loose in a theatre
with a bull, a lion, a goat and a bear,
and they went each day to watch her there
for the sake of her lovely hair.

KATHLEEN RAINE

MISERERE

Whose is this horrifying face,
This putrid flesh, discoloured, flayed,
Fed on by flies, scorched by the sun?
Whose are these hollow red-filmed eyes
And thorn-spiked head and spear-stuck side?
Behold the Man: He is Man's Son.

Forget the legend, tear the decent veil
That cowardice or interest devised
To make their mortal enemy a friend
And hide the bitter truth all His wounds tell
Lest the great scandal be no more disguised:
He is in agony till the world's end.

And we must never sleep during that time!
He is suspended on the cross-tree now
And we are onlookers at the crime,
Callous contemporaries of the slow
Torture of God. Here is the hill
Made ghastly by His spattered blood.

Whereon He hangs and suffers still:
See, the centurions wear riding-boots,
Black shirts and badges and peaked caps,
Greet one another with raised-arm salutes:
They have cold eyes, unsmiling lips,
Yet these His brothers know not what they do.

And on His either side hang dead
A labourer or a factory-hand,
Or one is maybe a lynched Jew
And one a Negro or a Red,
Coolie or Abyssinian, Irishman,
Spaniard or German democrat.

Behind His lolling head the sky
Glares like a fiery cataract
Red with the murders of two-thousand years
Committed in His name and by
Crusaders, Christian warriors
Defending faith and property.

Amid the plain beneath His transfixed hands,
Exuding darkness as indelible
As guilty stains, fanned by funereal
And lurid airs, besieged by drifting sands
And clefted landslides our about-to-be
Bombed and abandoned cities stand.

He who wept for Jerusalem
Now sees His prophecy extend
Across the greatest cities of the world,
A guilty panic reason cannot stem
Rising to raze them all as He foretold,
And He must watch the drama to the end.

Though often named, He is unknown
To the dark kingdoms at His feet
Where everything disparages His words,
And each man bears the common guilt alone
And goes blindfolded to his fate,
And fear and greed are sovereign lords.

*The turning-point of history
Must come. But the complacent and the proud
And who exploit and kill shall be denied—
Christ of Revolution and of Poetry—
The resurrection and the life
Wrought by Your spirit's blood.*

*Involved in their own sophistry
The black priest and the upright man
Faced by subversive truth shall be struck dumb,
Christ of Revolution and of Poetry,
And the rejected and condemned become
Agents of the divine.*

*Not from a monst'rance silver-wrought
But from the tree of human pain,
Redeem our sterile misery
Christ of Revolution and of Poetry,
That man's long journey through the night
May not have been in vain.*

DAVID GASCOYNE

AMOR FATI

Beloved enemy, preparer of my death,
When there's no longer any garment left
To lessen the clenched impact of our limbs,
When there is mutual drought in our swift breath
And twin tongues struggle for the brim
Of swollen flood—an aching undertow
Sucking us inward—when our blood's
Lust has attained its whitest glow
And the convulsion comes in quickening gusts,
Speaking is fatal: Do not break
That vacuum out of which our silence speaks
Of its sad speechless fury to the star
Whose glitter scars
The heavy heaven under which we lie
And injure one another O incurably!

DAVID GASCOYNE

THE RUIN AND THE SUN

I

Do I make my disasters clear? The wind from Mexico
Blows up its rumours and I let it go,
Or does it chase a white sun from the heavens?
Here or elsewhere I hear the sounds of woe,
Blown up from the babe to the young man of evening.

Or I stand lonely in a Japanese harbour, and shoot looks
At my ministers in China. Misery,
My misery, runs like a fable over Europe.
The people lift their hands and wait the end.
O Democracy, where is your sunny tree?

I read this terrible story in the times, futile
The black bomber and the little cunning chasers,
Futile the barb and barricade in England,
Or the sentry posted on the proper hill.
This is England, and England's ruin still.

II

Do I make my disasters clear? The wind is speaking.
I am a ghost only in the sound of its echo,
Having no life, but in its whistle of woe,
I am the cowed crowd in the Berlin café,
I am the Italian sorrow on the olive tree.

The wind blows. This is my fable. I, the poet, mad
With my own misery, and man's, am sad
For all the world's daughters, the young with a star,
The old who have never yet got there,
And for all man, the mad, the wicked, the glad.

I am the man of Paris and Madrid,
The man with a cloud of disaster over my head,
And faster, in England here, it comes on me, the wind
That blows only this nightmare on mankind,
That shows the fascist strong, and the democrat blind.

Hitler is love's taunting fable, the earth gone wrong,
Life like an eagle to pin and cage his map,
But all his flights bring him no further, no
Reward outlasts his dream. His is success
That feeds itself on failure. This is man's.

I see from all my windy speech no heaven,
For I am a ghost of a shadow under a dream:
The skilful madman makes things seem what they seem,
And all my words flutter out with the candle.
Light to-night is only the speaking wind.

III

The disasters are clear, from the wind in summer
That ruffles love's happy hair on the heathen hill,
From the look in the eyes that sees a fiend in the night,
The tears of good-bye, and the universal sorrow.
Bombs fall on the city and on cattle in the meadow.

Now we live like Eskimos under a shadow,
But under a shade more terrible than the Northern lights,
Under the fire of bomber, fighter, and guns,
Love can but take its minute, and wish for one more
Hug against the rattling cold, one more kiss.

For here the disaster is clear. Aware of this,
Like men breathing gas in a dream, we wonder,
Listen to the mocking speeches of the unjust,
Those who on their tongues have a new world to give,
But lie in their hearts, that they may live.

O monsters of gold, effigies of gain, O bankers,
With the people's curse on you, how now hope to survive,
How hope to keep the profit in the till.
You are safe while the chains of war continue to hold,
But like an earthquake the last day will arrive.

Disaster on disaster, but the people still live,
I, the sad man, and my darling, and many other ones,
In Berlin, in London, in Paris, all in the sunshine,
Who know their places well, and know the future.
The wind from Mexico blows. My misery

Hangs like the people's star on the chestnut tree.
The wind blows. The disaster is here and clear.
The tree in the wind sings differently. I see
The young man of evening lift his face in the sun,
Out of Europe's ruin Love come to everyone.

NICHOLAS MOORE

SOLDIERS AND INDIANS

The child needed his soldiers and his water
Pistol, to frighten the pygmies away,
To shoot the beasts that entered his dreams.
He needed his model yacht to ride the sea.

He pulled the hair from Belinda's head,
For a doll was not one of his needs:
He cut her tummy open and scattered her dust
Where the soldiers and Indians had their daily feuds.

And when the parson gave him a figure of Christ
He went and hid it in his mother's bed,
So his father told him to take his trousers down
And gave him the biggest wallop he'd ever had.

NICHOLAS MOORE

NOAH

The animals came in two by two,
The elephant and the kangaroo,
And Noah counted them over again
To see if there were more women than men.

The animals came in three by three,
The ant and the lion and the bee,
And Noah said it seemed like heaven
To see so much that was wild and living.

But Noah didn't know the answer
When he saw the strange shape of the merganser,
So he counted them all over again.
The animals came in ten by ten.

NICHOLAS MOORE

POEM*

Writing improbable stories on the walls of the asylum
the mad doctor hit on a marvellous cure,
he tried it on Cleopatra and it worked a wonder,
making each dream add up to a crystal stone.

The men she took, this was allowed in the asylum,
were at first the bony and scraggy who hid
in her embraces like little boys. Later they
grew to a more regular level of bodily intelligence.

But when she had had a surfeit of lovers
the dreams became fewer and less obstinate to learn,
until finally she had no dreams at all
and her kingdom was an illusion of the doctor's.

NICHOLAS MOORE

FOR ROBIN AND KIRSTIE

Again earth enters the cold tunnel,
Warm beams barely burnish the air
Icy and as crisp as silk;
Only the trees are left on fire:
And we have lasted a year of war.

The summer that brought disaster and death
Still brought you safely from the island,
Left us our lives and the knowledge of love.
The year is not wholly unkind
Whose tide-fall leaves such treasure behind.

* With acknowledgments to *The Townsman*.

Now raiders whistle the wind
Wherever it blows, and make the distance
Wider between your hills and ours:
Yet still the fact of your existence
Is comfort and is confidence.

For I remember the delight I had—
And may have—in your company,
In many mundane and cheerful things,
But in music chiefly,
That is both human and heavenly.

Soon we may learn to fear our beds
As little as our quieter graves:
Meanwhile I send to you, dear cousins,
Thanks and a blessing for your lives,
And pray God to preserve your loves.

ANNE RIDLER

FRAGMENT

Now Philippa is gone, that so divinely
Could strum and sing, and is rufus and gay,
Have we the heart to sing, or at mid-day
Dive under Trotton Bridge? We shall only
Doze in the yellow spikenard by the wood
And take our tea and melons in the shade.

ANNE RIDLER

GLASTONBURY TOR (for E.M.D.)

Here on this accurate, conspicuous point
Time in a perfect balance complicates
Present and future. Where the gracious saint
Founded religion and the past debates
Its infinite minute, history awaits
The risk of the body, the adventure done
In lung, in heart, and in frail skeleton.

Drowned in this minute's brief eternity
We are that legendary and lucid people,
Forfeiting all in a sweet chivalry,
Immaculate, the actual disciples
Of Avalon. Our energetic scruple
Governs the quest and the whole compass swings
Its northern needle on a myth of kings.

Caught in this vision, years like shadows blow
Over the valley and these stones declare
Their wide significance, the endless flow
Of time tumultuous beyond the far
Horizon of thought. Destructible, we are
Facing destruction; the whole issue lies
In our intrinsic faith, our sympathies.

J. C. HALL

CURTAINS

Curtains are imperative walls;
Hands fidget for them as night falls.

Men draw them desperately taut
Across their windows drained of light

And some believe the pane bends in
With the heavy fog the black rain.

And one I knew was driven mad,
Stark crazy in his usual bed,

Because the blinds would no-way hide
A wink of terror from outside.

One likewise swooning in the cool
Uncurtained church at vesper-bell

Came to a miserable, deep grave
When men most passionately live.

Yet all who abide this anguish say
That I'm the haunted one—not they;

I suffering the prodigious skies
The mirrors of my pillowed eyes,

Curled in the colossal night
I with my sombre still delight,

My intimacy with the dark
Catastrophe above the park,

I with the stigmata and scars
Nailed on a crucifix of stars.

J. C. HALL

SONNET

Braving the furnace of desire we move
Our bodies through the unfamiliar flame,
The blazing chamber where we two become
Three in the startled Babylon of love.
Arming the heretic a third beside
Moves in our midst and reaffirms our faith,
Aiding the gradual agony of birth
And this renaissance which our fears denied.

Passion and strength, our heritage, unite
In the short minute's boundless history,
The cardinal and lovely point of light
This furnace hoards. Unscathed and fearless we
Move through the heart of knowledge, know our guide
Still the undoubted presence of a god.

J. C. HALL

ELEGY FOR THE DEAD

(SECTION VI from *Out of this War*)

Raw the plague that entombs us, and the fever
Running, open-faced, through this wilderness. Dunkirk
Will descend with a hold of black weeping. O Never,
The blood of St. Omer or Saarbrucken,
Flower again in the morning.

The Skager Rak

Threw its hands across the windy water
And gathered the remains, to an empty bosom.
Blood is the house under that water.

Or further, look, on the sharp coast of China;
Whirled the lantern of Death. Humbly they lie
Gunned on the evil that laid them low—What evil
Hand did they deal in this game of Greed!

Die

Progeny of the Sun, yellow brother, unimportant;
But the exultant Sin has fallen on our courtyards,
And after the worlds are hung in the Nothingness, together
We'll heave a different world of sandalwood and myrrh.

Down, soundlessly you went, innocent brother,
The swallow fist felled on the ancient musket;
Basket of Immortal Suffering red on the shoulder,
Bolder than the painful bullet you met.
Yet the suns return over the rice and wheat,
Return immortal brother, to your fields.
Yours the crime of love only. The deceit
Of gold and machines, unholy foreign meat.

Raw the wounds that enslave us. The open tomb
Of sallow Custom, rubbing mud over eyes
And icy lips. Wound down in hoary lies,
Unable to weave a telling synthesis
Of old cloth and mouldy habit. The Spring
Living, bowled under the bone of sloth and ritual.

Wrath of God, untwine the tangled eyes,
Incise the idiot cant, unseal the dumb lips!

Where, the lily lights of yesterday,
The defiant singing and the stout belief
Clouting the sagging juices of the blood?
Where the fat adoration and temples fall, thud
The machinery of doubt or sanity
On twisted floors of memory—Flanders'
Running spite and crooked commentary,
The evil Hun and lost civilization.

Poor yellow head on Dunkirk sand,
Grand in Death's diffusion. You went
Splendidly to battle, to Oudernarde
And Ypres, at the yellow Menin Gate
With the dead word on your lips.
Old gestures and phrases bent you before their whips;
Did you believe them, or did the doubt fell
You, like France, even before you fell.

Civilization has its gaping doubts
Like winter its bulbs. The barbarian
Is winged on the knife and bayonet.
We question culture—the 100% Aryan,
Real in the objective existence, to some
But false to the solid blood. Law, custom,
Science, faith, faultless in *plein air* pull tombs
Over life spontaneous, and topple the hungry wombs.

Raw the plague of Socrates, and the Culture
Bred in the Athenian forum, caught and thrown
From Descartes to Spinoza, across the loam
Of groaning blood and bone. Life divided,
Life cut, stripped and plundered
Of the spontaneous sap and verjuice
Gleaming in supple institutions.

Dead

Is the earth, my poor and yellow head.

This sculpted flower reason, poised and perfect
In geometric blissfulness, is ignorant of pulse
And systole. Perfect in teeth and bulge
Never rubs faith into generous flame.
What use correctness, without emotion. What use
Our honest Goodness, without Emotional Thrust
Truth without Sincerity (merely 'culturist')?

Heavy the years of solid night and destruction,
And the years return to the loaded earth
And empty heads. 'We knock our lying brains
Together extravagantly.' Never the round life
Of the striking, roaring blood did we fill,
But stilled by the aspatial glitter and glare,
The trumpet of a blind Utopia. We slept
The dear life in the tombs of Concept.

We bent the brittle life to the pattern of the stars,
Or swung the blood to the slide-rule or the bear.
Torn is the Sabbath from the blooming rose.
Man, the servant of his own devising
And division. We bent our holy lives
Across the Law that seldom gave us faith.

We are the children who believed without belief.
We are the children who loved without love.

II

Loud the lamentation that falls
On our stone valleys. Dunkirk is shot
A bolt through oil into ghost face,
And hours, where things are not recalled or remembered.
Shot like a dog, the boy lies bleeding
Under the iron grape, calling for mercy;
Calling the temples, with his crooked hand.
Dust is the poem in that fallen hand.

Come now my ghost, my brother, to my side
Striding the deep holes of the Channel.
To-day's sorrow and ache, to-morrow's pleasure.
These pressured moments, to-morrow's leisure.

Dark

Is the doom over us all. And as we fall
We hold the poison monkshood to our bosoms.
Dazed in our cellar to the jazz-band's coaxing,
We empty our lives and hold our dreaming.

The white city loaded with metal and hate
Shakes its agues into the season's pool.
Ghost of my disaster, regard these faces
Banging their hollowness loud, in Underground.
Not in the Dornier doom you see them wound
But their own emptiness and lying lives.
Faith is tall in the open, out in the sun
Gunning the colic moods of all the million.

But their eyes are shut to the exploding night;
The heart falls away in weathered dust.
The evil has tunnelled to the bone
Of our gold days, to disasters blown.
We have no hands to hold, no eyes to weep
And as the sweeping rain adds clod to heap
We add the minutes to a dead season,
The season of Nought and hibernation.

Descend O warmth into this frigid sex
And wax the blood to a rigid flame.
Propose a meaning for the thousand dead,
Our children fallen on the careless shame.
The mouths of ash are whistling in France
And the hoarded woe blowing from China.
The blood runs dry, this bread is cracked,
Our limbs are freezing and our trousers patched.

Give back the robe of splendid sap,
Lap us in the gold, the power and ooze
Of rounded hours in the melon's belly
Singing: gills of the sun-filled juice.
Diffuse the laws and purple thrones
Over the plains and blowing Life.
Knifed to the cross of blood, we'll sup
Of Freedom and hurled up, up.

TAMBIMUTTU

A NOCTUARY

I have tasted a quantum of misfortune.
I have prayed before the left-handed woman,
And love, sweet love, who nods under the water-clock

Can bring if she will the sexton and the box
For I wear my age as wood wears voluble leaves.
I have sipped from the flask of resurrection,

Have eaten the oaten cake of redemption,
In February smile from a chaplet of iron thorn.
I have buried my wife under the dolmen,

And now from penury's place, the penny candle,
Pausing in pain to catechise a cloud,
Look, I bury my gender under the Holy Pew.

You who are Nonesuch, being happily of heaven,
Where tamarisk where lentisk lean to utter sweets
Or angels in their shining moods retire,

I have tasted a quantum of misfortune,
Carried my tribulation in a basket of wattle,
O measure of mercy a close minim for the lost man.

In front of others I have spoken the vowel,
In the city of ash and feathers, and under Crete
Left ikons of my feet on the desert's floors,

Or made such poems from a whole day's breathing,
The common comma shining here like tears.
I have set my wife's eye under the bandage.

Now pound the roses, bind the eye of the soul,
Let the book of sickness be put in the embers,
Recite the charm of the deep and heal soon,

I have tasted my quantum of misfortune.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

THE GREEN MAN

four small nouns I put to pasture
as lambs of cloud on a green paper.
my love leans like a beadle at her book,
her smile washes the seven cities.

I am the spring's greenest publicity,
that a poem is all wrist and elbow.
O I am not daedal and need wings,
my oracle kisses the black wand.

one great verb I dip in ink
for the tortoise who holds the earth:
a grammar of fate like a map of China,
as wrinkles sit in the hand of a girl.

I enter my poem like a son's house:
the ancient thought is: nothing will change.
but the nouns are back in the bottle.
I ache and she is warm, was warm.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

LORCA

Poems. By F. GARCIA LORCA. With English translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili. Selection and introduction by R. M. Nadal. (The Dolphin, 5, Cecil Court, London.) 7s. 6d.

This is a comprehensive selection of Lorca's poems and the translation is excellent—that is to say, it is exact and does not attempt any variations for the sake of rhythm or rhyme. The poetry survives the translation, partly because of the nature of the poetry, partly because English is also a crystalline language, enclosing its vowels in sharp angles of consonants. But the English lacks the richness of Castilian inflexions:

Es imposible
callarla

is musical, singable; but the only possible English translation is merely flat:

It is impossible
to hush it.

But the English often has almost an exact poetic equivalence. For example:

Barandales de la luna
por donde retumba el agua

Balustrades of the moon
where the water resounds.

Of the foreign poets of our time, Lorca is the one from whom we have most to learn. He brings us back to a realization of the essential objectivity of poetry—its particularity, its sensuousness, its simplicity. By comparison, Rilke is wordy and ambiguous, his poetry weakened by reflexion and mysticism. By comparison, Valéry is artificial, intellectual and esoteric. Lorca unites two extremes—the primeval balladry of a people, racial, collective and inherently popular; and the new romanticism which we call surrealism. It should be remembered that Lorca was a friend, not only of the gypsies, the strolling players and the bull-fighters, but also of Salvador Dalí, Manuel de Falla and other intellectuals. Senor Nadal seems to deprecate his surrealism a little, but it was not inconsistent with his earlier magic, and his intensest poetry is in this manner:

Not for one moment, beautiful aged Walt Whitman,
have I failed to see your beard full of butterflies,
nor your shoulders of corduroy worn out by the
moon,
nor your thighs of virginal Apollo,
nor your voice like a pillar of ashes;
ancient and beautiful as the mist,
you moaned like a bird
with the sex pierced by a needle.

This "Ode to Walt Whitman," and the similar "Ode to the King of Harlem," are among the greatest of modern poems, complex, tragic, and completely actual. But the same poet could write songs and lyrics as simple and musical and timeless as the songs in Shakespeare's plays.

Senor Nadal, in his authoritative introduction, dispels some of the legends and misunderstandings which have already clouded the poet's fame; in particular, he makes a vigorous protest against the attempt to politicise Lorca's name. Lorca was not a party man and never would have been; he was too great a poet.

HERBERT READ

RILKE

Duino Elegies. By RAINER MARIA RILKE.
(Hogarth.) 7s. 6d.

Poetry is a man's death coming alive in him. The poem is an incubator in which the spirit can kill itself off in order to gain a kind of eternity in time, in the rhythm of duration. They say that when Rilke was dying, and the doctors wanted to give him morphia to help him away, he would not let them do so. "Because," he said, "I want to feel my death ripening inside me." He had already conquered Death by making it personal, by expropriating it while he lived.

"In the *Elegies*," he had written to his Polish translator, "affirmation of life AND affirmation of death reveal themselves as one. To concede the one without the other is, as is here celebrated and experienced, a restriction that excludes all infinity. Death is our reverted, our unilluminated, side of life: we must try to achieve the greatest possible consciousness of our existence, which is . . . inexhaustibly nourished out of both. . . ."

It will be immediately obvious just how pointless any attempt to "review" Rilke would be. We are dealing with someone who is not

an addict of words, but an addict of God; that he should be rendered into the hands of critics is due to the unfortunate vagaries of the contemporary literary machine.

The only honest way to deal with the really great men is to offer not speculations about style form and content, but the purely personal reactions. The following scribbles I transcribe from a piece of paper on which I was writing as I read the *Elegies*.

"Rilke marks the first real conquest of the Eastern philosophy of life in the history of European literature; analogies among the mystics of the Middle Ages, among certain Ionian philosophers; but a marked difference from the EXUBERANCE of the Neo-platonic mystics. The aerial and unearthly calm is closer to Lao Tzu; it argues a SOLUTION rather than a mere elaboration of intuitions, enthusiasms, divine frenzies, etc., the mystical paraphernalia. There is here a complete stasis, which only brings to mind one work of art which I have come across to date—strangely enough, Beethoven's F minor quartet. This is a big stride forward in the orientation of the Western soul towards Reality. The unnatural perplexity of mystical growth does not lend itself to violence, sound and fury, testament à la Sufis, Gnostics, etc., but rather the pure orientation towards divinity which demands no demonstration, but feeds itself by its own flame."

I am aware that these notes are painfully inadequate, but my space, no less than my ability to deal with someone of this size, is strictly limited.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

SPENDER

The Still Centre. By STEPHEN SPENDER.
Translated by J. B. LEISHMANN and
STEPHEN SPENDER. (Faber and Faber.)
6s.

Stephen Spender's new book not only confirms the opinions of those who think he is a very good poet, but it is a monument to the difficulties of self-criticism. The best poems have the athleticism of a severe discipline, and others reveal their weaknesses on the surface in a way which is part of the inherent philosophy of "weakness":

. . . to accept
My own weakness beyond dispute.

This ambition has led to a prolonged struggle with feelings and words to express the feelings, and it is of this personal drama that the poetry consists even in poems like the very fine "Napoleon," where the poet's own reflections about greatness and defeat are projected onto another figure. Returning to the theme of "I think continually of those who were truly great," he movingly writes of the elite of the dead:

. . . who now return
To greet us and advise us and to warn
Not giving us their love, but as examples
and he asks himself the question:

How are we justified?

The need for justification is double. He needs to reach greatness by transcending human scales and also to be human himself in admitting his own weakness (alternatively that of being human and of not being human). This predicament has its most important expression in the first "Variations on My Life":

To knock and enter
Knock and enter
The cloudless posthumous door
Where the slack guts are drawn into taut music
And there to sit and speak
With those who went before;
And to be justified
At last being at their side
To know I have no quality
Of ultimate inferiority
But bear on rounded shoulders the weight of my
humanity.

It is probably significant that some of his most concentrated poetry should take this form of the generalised command in the infinitive, e.g. "To knock and enter," which shows the kinship of his didactic attitude to that of Eliot, who, however, can prefix his admonition with a request for help:

Teach us to care and not to care

as indeed Auden has frequently done, though without an explicitly religious apparatus:

Sir, no man's enemy. . . .

But since Stephen Spender's sanction is one of internal analysis, there is no one to whom he can turn for help except himself.

While quite conscious of his facility for inventing beautiful phrases, his attitude about

them is typically enough a mixed fear and acceptance. One can see him sometimes cutting them out, sometimes allowing them to luxuriate, according to the internal necessity of the state of mind he is rendering. It is very important for him to convey to the reader by his intonation the absolute honesty and transparency of his feelings, and this need may over-ride the more detached poetic considerations. On the surface is the now celebrated lyricism of "gold," "light" and "flower," with its equally characteristic nervous violences expressed in words like "staring," "terrible" and suggestions of infinity, eternity, finality, totality. These are the inflationary aspect of his diction, but inwoven with it is the subtler deflated verbalism of such phrases as these (more frequent in this book than in the first volume of poems):

The Man of Destiny ill-destined . . .

The following handkerchiefs of spray . . .

My own posthumous voice
Which nothing does refuse
And only death denies.

The effect of the last quotation (the concluding lines of "Variations on My Life") is due to the alternative interpretation of "nothing" and "death" as either the subject or object of their verbs. But the most original and personal element in this poetry is its self-analysis in terms of an intense consciousness of the human body and the narcissism of crucifixion.

CHARLES MADGE

MacNEICE

Autumn Journal. A poem by LOUIS MACNEICE.
(Faber.) 6s.

When poetry is poetry, there is little the critic can say except divine that the genuine stuff is there amid such and such surroundings and flowing at such and such a level. A description of the surroundings—the mental environment, the personal limitations of the poet—will not give the reader a short cut to the excitement of an experience which the poetry itself contains. And if the critic *criticises* the poet, this too should be a way of describing and qualifying and relating—not

interfering with or condemning—the poet's talent.

Mr. MacNeice is a true poet. Read his poems. They cannot be dismissed or explained away. They will give you a new and indescribable experience. I can only try here to relate that to other poetic experiences.

Autumn Journal is a poetic journal kept from September to December, 1938. It is an autobiography, a confession, and, to some extent, pure journalism, since it records Mr. MacNeice's reactions to the public events of last September, and a tour of Barcelona which he made in December. Besides this it contains an account of his school life, Oxford, his marriage, his flat in Hampstead, his dog (which will soon qualify as the Mr. Sponge of new verse), and a recent love affair.

This poem takes a place in Mr. MacNeice's development, strikingly parallel to *Locksley Hall* in Tennyson's. One can easily imagine Tennyson writing *Autumn Journal* in a less inhibited age, when the identity of his Amy need not be concealed. Mr. MacNeice has the mental background and the attitude of a Tennyson. A scholar and poet, to whom the dead languages are anything but dead, inclined to soliloquy and the comfortableness of a precise but snug literary music, he is suddenly forced to attend to the outside world, which he does with a certain fierceness and in a line that has the sarcastic lash of *Locksley Hall* or of a footnote by Gibbon. Like Tennyson, he recites the newspaper headlines and the interests of his day with a ringing irony, which has the effect of throwing them into the reader's face:

Conferences, adjournments, ultimatums,
Flights in the air, castles in the air,
The autopsy of treaties, dynamite under the bridges,
The end of *laissez faire*.
After the warm days the rain comes pimpling
The paving stones with white
And with the rain the national conscience, creeping,
Sleeping through the night.

Incidentally, one has to go back to *In Memoriam* to find such good descriptions of London as are here.

Like Tennyson also, strong as is his individuality, there is a certain commonplaceness about Mr. MacNeice's sensibility. As far as the mind goes, this book reads like a more scholarly, more perceptive, Left Wing,

Cochran's revue. Mr. MacNeice likes everything that Mr. Cochran's audiences like: the same elegant and "witty" and smart women, the same jazzy interior decoration, the same dogs, the same cars, the same furs. When he writes most intimately about himself, in his account here of school and Oxford, he has nothing to say that one would not get out of *The Loom of Youth*, *Young Woodley*, *Sinister Street*, etc. I know far less about Oxford philosophy than he does, but I know enough to be slightly shocked at the shoddiness of the gibes contained in Section XIII of this poem, which, coming from a don, would delightfully titillate the ignorance of any shirt-fronted Left or Right Wing audience. The music of much of MacNeice's writing is something half-way between a crooner's jazzy lilt and an Oxford drawl.

But when I have said all this I get back to admiring Mr. MacNeice for giving himself away as far as he does here.

After all the vulgarity—if it is that—is not just vulgarity, it is an honest confession of the writer's whole bag of tricks, his whole glittering shop window. When one sees that, one sees to something beyond—a mind and a soul which is trying to develop by taking stock of all its potentialities and seeing what can come of them. Much of what comes is already marvellous.

STEPHEN SPENDER

HORIZON

Horizon: A Review of Literature and Art, edited by CYRIL CONNOLLY. 1s. (7s. for six months).

An important statement has been made in the last two numbers of *Horizon* (Nos. 10 and 11). Mr. Connolly has published two articles on D. H. Lawrence in No. 10, and states in his monthly Commentary in that number: "If a revolution ever takes place in England it will owe something to Lawrence as a precursor."

Lawrence rose in rebellion against morality because morality had previously refused to accept life. Human life has its cultural and spontaneous aspects and it was Lawrence's thesis that culture and vital life in the West had become dissociated from each other, and

almost antipodal. He believed it was wrong to substitute spontaneous life with reason; he did not mean to say, however, that he would like to see a primevalism, of the sort preached by Rousseau, brought about. In his vague, emotional way, he merely pointed out that reason is only a tiny speck in the flood of primeval vitality, and that it should be reduced to its proper role in the biological scheme, where it would aid spontaneity, and not replace it, as those who worked by *logoi* would have it.

In this number, Lawrence is reported to have said about a nervous, fumbling negro waiter: "All his movements are *mental*, he doesn't trust his blood, he's afraid." Doing and believing what reason prompts us, believing what we really don't believe, we are accustomed to regard spontaneous life through the crystal of pure reason. Lawrence would have us regard reason through life, for it seemed ridiculous to him that we should ask life to grant concessions to culture.

It is an important sign that another literary magazine, besides *Poetry*, should hold this point of view. Surely after this great European tragedy it is bound to become even more widespread! In his next Comment in No. 11 (published this month) Mr. Connolly writes about "natural man" and "economic man" on the same ideological basis. *Horizon* is certainly a sign of the times.

The existence of a magazine like this, at the present moment, is a fact of the greatest importance. Looking through past numbers, one is impressed by the various and varied collection of good writing that it has published. What is still more important, to my mind, is the Commentary of the editor, which rivets each issue into an organic whole, and gives it a definite sound and purposivity that is sadly lacking in many literary magazines in this country. It is one thing to rake together a collection of good writing, but another to mould it, and give it a distinctive flavour. A magazine is like a man, and it has a personality—the editor's. It must have sense, direction, self-consistency, all attributes of *Horizon*. Read the last two numbers. The editor's remarks, marked by an insight into contemporary affairs that is only too revealing, are well worth consideration, because he is never afraid to tell the truth, even about the

man from the Munich beer-cellar, and seems always ready to improve on his statements.

New poets have appeared in the company of the better-known ones in this periodical, and among them W. R. Rodgers, Anne Ridler and Laurie Lee, who evidently is an admirer of Spender, are the most interesting. Mr. Rodgers has a maturity that is unusual in a

new poet and he should find no difficulty in finding a publisher for his first book.

In this month's issue there is an excellent article by Francis Scarfe on Dylan Thomas.

The public should lend their support to *Horizon* by subscribing to it.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

- The Trumpet and Other Poems* by EDWARD THOMAS. (Faber.) 2s. 6d.
The Gathering Storm by WILLIAM EMPSON. (Faber.) 6s.
Rhymed Ruminations by SIEGFRIED SASSOON. (Faber.) 5s.
No More Ghosts, Selected Poems by ROBERT GRAVES. (Faber.) 2s. 6d.
East Coker by T. S. ELIOT. (Faber.) 1s.
Poets of To-morrow. Second Selection Cambridge Poetry 1940. (Hogarth.) 6s.
Versailles Summer by E. WYKEHAM EDMONDS. (Williams & Norgate.) 2s. 6d.
Song and Idea by RICHARD EBERHART. (Chatto & Windus.) 6s.
New Zealand Poems by EILEEN DUGGAN. (Allen & Unwin.) 2s.
Tiresias and Other Poems by R. N. CURREY. (O.U.P.) 5s.
Messene Redeemed by F. L. LUCAS. (O.U.P.) 3s. 6d.

HORIZON

Edited by Cyril Connolly

MONTHLY

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We are working under difficult conditions. One of our editors has to hold the fort alone in London as the other is serving in the army. We therefore hope that all our friends will continue their support; and that each one of our subscribers will co-operate with us by getting at least two of their friends to send us a subscription. We particularly appeal to our friends in the U.S.A., for paper and printing prices are high now in our island and we are still the only magazine in this country devoted entirely to Poetry, and offering a free and unfettered "platform for all poets."

We bring to the notice of new friends, who meet us for the first time in this number, the **Poetry Fund**, which was generously opened by **Sir Edward Marsh, K.C.V.O.**, with a donation of £5, and to which the late **Mr. George Eumorfopolous**, among others, donated £10. We hope that any other of our well-wishers who can do so will assist us in raising the capital we require to ensure the existence of POETRY (London) by sending what they can afford to this Fund.

ANTHONY DICKINS (*Lance Corporal*), *Associate Editor*.

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